

VIII

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS  
HELD IN NEW YORK CITY, DECEMBER 29, 1935.

A special meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts was held at the Century Club, New York City, on December 29, 1935, for further consideration of plans for the Government buildings to be erected at the Texas Centennial Exposition. The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,  
Mr. Swartwout,  
Mr. Howells,  
Mr. Clarke.

The Texas Centennial Commission was informed at the meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts on December 20th, that "as the style of buildings for the exposition has already been set the Commission of Fine Arts do not disapprove the design of the buildings, as presented". The Texas Centennial Commission was not satisfied with this report, since it did not specifically approve the plans, and replied by letter, as follows:

December 21, 1935.

My dear Mr. Moore:

I have received your letter of December 20, 1935, informing me that the Commission of Fine Arts do not disapprove of the designs for the Federal buildings presented to you at your last meeting by Mr. George Dahl, acting for the Exposition management, and myself. I do not believe that your statement meets technically the legal requirement that all building designs covering projects contemplated by the Commission must have the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts.

If your Commission can consistently do so I should appreciate receiving an expression of their approval of the building designs submitted. On the other hand, should the Commission of Fine Arts feel, for some reason, that the designs are not suitable, I should appreciate being so informed, with their suggestions as to how the designs may be altered to meet with their approval.

Sincerely yours,  
(Signed) W. B. Yeager,  
Executive Secretary.



Accordingly, the Chairman supplemented the report of the Commission of Fine Arts by letter of December 23, 1935:

Dear Mr. Yeager:

Replying to your letter of December 21, the Commission of Fine Arts would supplement their report on the designs for the Government Building and the Negro Arts Building to be constructed at the Texas Centennial Exposition.

As you know the designs were presented suddenly at the meeting of this Commission on December 20, with the statement by the architect that the building must be completed by June next. Therefore the approval of the Commission must be forthcoming immediately. There was no time to discuss with the architect any question of details. It was simply a matter of either giving immediate consent or seriously delaying the Government buildings at the Exposition. Had there been time and opportunity, the Commission would have made suggestions which in their judgment would have eliminated certain features with benefit to the appearance of the Government Building. But this would have caused serious delay.

Therefore, this Commission took the broad view that the general architectural treatment of the Exposition buildings had been fixed; that the designs submitted were in general accord with the architectural scheme adopted; and therefore this Commission should not disapprove these designs at the expense of delaying the opening of the Exposition. This was made the more obvious by the statement that the buildings were planned to be only temporary. The experience of the Commission is that "temporary" buildings usually have long life, as the temporary war buildings in Washington prove. But the benefit of the doubt was given in favor of the plans presented.

The statement made in the Commission's letter that the plans were not disapproved was intended to facilitate the work and to enable the buildings to be constructed according to the plans. It is evident from your letter that the report of the Commission was not sufficient to accomplish this intended purpose.

Therefore, with the above explanation, the Commission hereby give their approval to the designs as submitted.

It must be obvious, however, that without opportunity for preliminary discussion during the preparation of the plans, the services of the Commission are made perfunctory and of no avail in so far as the protection of the Government is concerned.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Mr. William B. Yeager,  
Executive Secretary,  
U. S. Texas Centennial Commission,  
Washington, D. C.

Very truly yours,  
(Signed) Charles Moore,  
Chairman.



The Texas Centennial Commission further objected to this report in that they desired to protect the interests of the Government, and so stated in a letter dated December 26, 1935, (Exhibit A).

Thereupon , Mr. Moore decided to hold a special meeting with the architect members of the Commission and Mr. Clarke in New York City. This was held on Sunday morning, December 29. It was decided at this meeting to omit the three pylons of the original design and have instead a central tower to represent the Government with flagpoles and large flags to flank the entrance. Furthermore, recommendations were made to omit the proposed sculpture, and as to the design for the Negro Arts building. A report was sent to the Texas Centennial Commission embodying these recommendations. (Exhibit B)

On the afternoon of January 7, 1936, the Texas Centennial Commission submitted through Mr. Yeager revised designs for these Federal buildings, Mr. Dahl being present also. Mr. Moore and Mr. Swartwout considered the designs. They noted that Mr. Dahl had embodied the recommendations of the Commission. Mr. Swartwout considered the revised designs an improvement over the original. For the Government building Mr. Dahl had designed a central tower, a triangular pylon, 175 feet high, and a large "architectural" eagle at the top of the front of the building. The sculpture over the entrances had been omitted.

Mr. Dahl said a saving of from \$35,000 to \$40,000 or about 10 per cent of the original cost of the building had been made through these new plans by omitting the two pylons. Mr. Moore thought the amount should be greater than this, but Mr. Dahl said the increased height of the tower and a deeper foundation have necessitated extra expense.

Two flagpoles were shown flanking the entrance. Mr. Swartwout thought the height of them should be somewhat increased. Also he believed that the base of each flagpole should be further studied and improved by increasing the mass at the foot of the pole. In connection with the type of flag to be used, Mr. Dahl



said effort will be made to get as large a flag as possible measuring about 39 by 50 feet. Attention was called to the large flags used on the flagpoles of St. Mark's Square, Venice.

The revised design for the Federal Negro building shows that the facade had been simplified in accordance with the recommendations of the Commission.

The revised designs were approved and a report was sent to the Texas Centennial Commission accordingly. (Exhibit C)







THE UNITED STATES  
TEXAS CENTENNIAL COMMISSION

Washington, D. C.  
December 26, 1935

Dear Mr. Moore:

I acknowledge the receipt of your communication of December 23, 1935, relative to the designs proposed for the Federal Exhibits Building and the Federal Negro Building in the Texas Centennial Central Exposition at Dallas.

I still do not feel that your position as stated, meets technically the requirement that the designs of buildings to be erected by the Commission have the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts. This requirement was imposed to protect the interests of the Government. An approval given which in your opinion does not fulfill this primary purpose is, to the Commission and to the Government, of negative value.

The Commission would, therefore, appreciate the Commission of Fine Arts reopening consideration of the building designs with a view to informing the Commission whether changes should be made in the designs submitted or whether the latter should be eliminated entirely and new designs substituted. If new designs are preferable, the Commission would appreciate suggestions to facilitate their satisfactory preparation.

Mr. Charles Moore,  
Chairman,

The Commission of Fine Arts, Exhibit A  
Washington, D. C.



The Commission feel that you will wish, in your deliberations, to bear in mind two factors which cannot help but directly influence the situation. Probably the most important of these is the early date set for the opening of the Exposition. Between now and June 6, next, the Federal buildings must be completed and the Federal exhibits installed.

Also of importance is the desirability of having in each building a large area of usable exhibit space. The goal has been to obtain 45,000 square feet net of exhibits space in the Federal Exhibits Building, and 8,000 to 10,000 square feet net of exhibits space in the Federal Negro Building. Under contract the cost of the Federal Exhibits Building is not to exceed \$325,000, including a payment of six per cent of the construction cost to the architect. Similarly, the cost of the Federal Negro Building is, under contract, not to exceed \$50,000, including a payment of six per cent to the architect.

I enclose pictures of the building designs under consideration, together with a site description of each. As I have informed you, the larger pictures and plans were taken by the architect to Dallas.

The Exposition management has communicated to me this morning that Mr. Dahl will be glad to return to Washington upon notice. Will you inform me whether he could be of assistance to your Commission?



The Commission would be pleased to have this matter receive early attention.

Sincerely yours,

*W. B. Yeager*  
Executive Secretary

Enclosures





C O P Y

December 30, 1935.

Dear Mr. Yeager:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at a special meeting held in New York City, December 29, 1935, having considered your letter of December 26, relative to the designs proposed for the Federal Exhibits Building and the Federal Negro Building at the Texas Centennial Exposition at Dallas, report as follows:

Federal Building

First. It is to be regretted that the main central portion of this building is a reproduction of the Government Building at the Chicago Fair of 1933-4.

Second. It is suggested that a large central tower be substituted for the three pylons. These pylons have no function to perform, and therefore two of them may well be dispensed with. The central one, retaining its position, may well serve as the main entrance to the building. The tower should be carefully studied and should be larger and higher than shown in the sketch. The Government Building should have the quality of dominance over surrounding buildings.

Third. In place of the two omitted pylons this Commission suggest that the central tower be flanked by two large monumental flagstaffs, from which the United States flag and the flag of the State of Texas would be flown. Special flags of larger size than the largest regulation flag should be provided for use on special occasions, or whenever the weather permits. Such flags will mark the official character of the building and give a desired touch of color.

Fourth. While the sculpture shown on the drawings is an important part of the composition, it should be omitted unless sculptors can be found who will produce satisfactory results within the very limited time allotted.

Negro Building

First. The Commission suggest lowering the row of vertical piers to a height equal to or a little lower than the side flanking pavilions.

EXHIBIT B





Second. That the dog-tooth ornament around the top of the small front structure be omitted. Retain the bas-reliefs, if they can be well executed.

Further Submissions

The Commission make these suggestions for the consideration of the architect. A sketch showing the results of his consideration should be submitted to the Commission, for their prompt consideration.

This Commission have borne in mind the two factors mentioned in your letter; first, the time limit; and second, the amount of usable space.

The suggestions of the Commission, if carried out, will considerably reduce the amount of construction, and should thereby work a saving of time as well as money. The amount of usable space is not curtailed at all.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very truly yours,  
(Signed) Charles Moore,  
Chairman.

Mr. William B. Yeager,  
Executive Secretary,  
United States Texas Centennial  
Commission,  
Department of Commerce Building,  
Washington, D. C.



C O P Y

January 7, 1936.

Dear Mr. Yeager:

The Commission of Fine Arts approve the revised designs for the Federal Exhibits Building and the Federal Negro Building to be erected at the Texas Centennial Exposition as submitted today.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Mr. William B. Yeager,  
Executive Secretary,  
United States Texas Centennial  
Commission,  
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT C



Discussion by MR. F. A. DELANO, MR. CAMERLER, MR. HUBBARD, MR. NICHOLS, CAPT. CLARK, MR. W. A. DELANO and MR. NOLEN included relation of this building to the new Interior building; projections beyond Constitution Avenue building line; desirability of study of the area north of the building; question of who will supervise and maintain the triangular area north of the building. MR. NOLEN pointed out that MR. CRAT is planning only to grade and seed the area north of the building, leaving to the Park Office the development and maintenance.

No action at this time.

The Commission of Fine Arts joined the meeting at this time, and the Chairman stated that the Commission will now revolve itself into a joint meeting of the two Commissions.

28. Grover Cleveland Memorial:

Subject postponed for further study at the suggestion of the Commission of Fine Arts.

29. Thomas Jefferson Memorial:

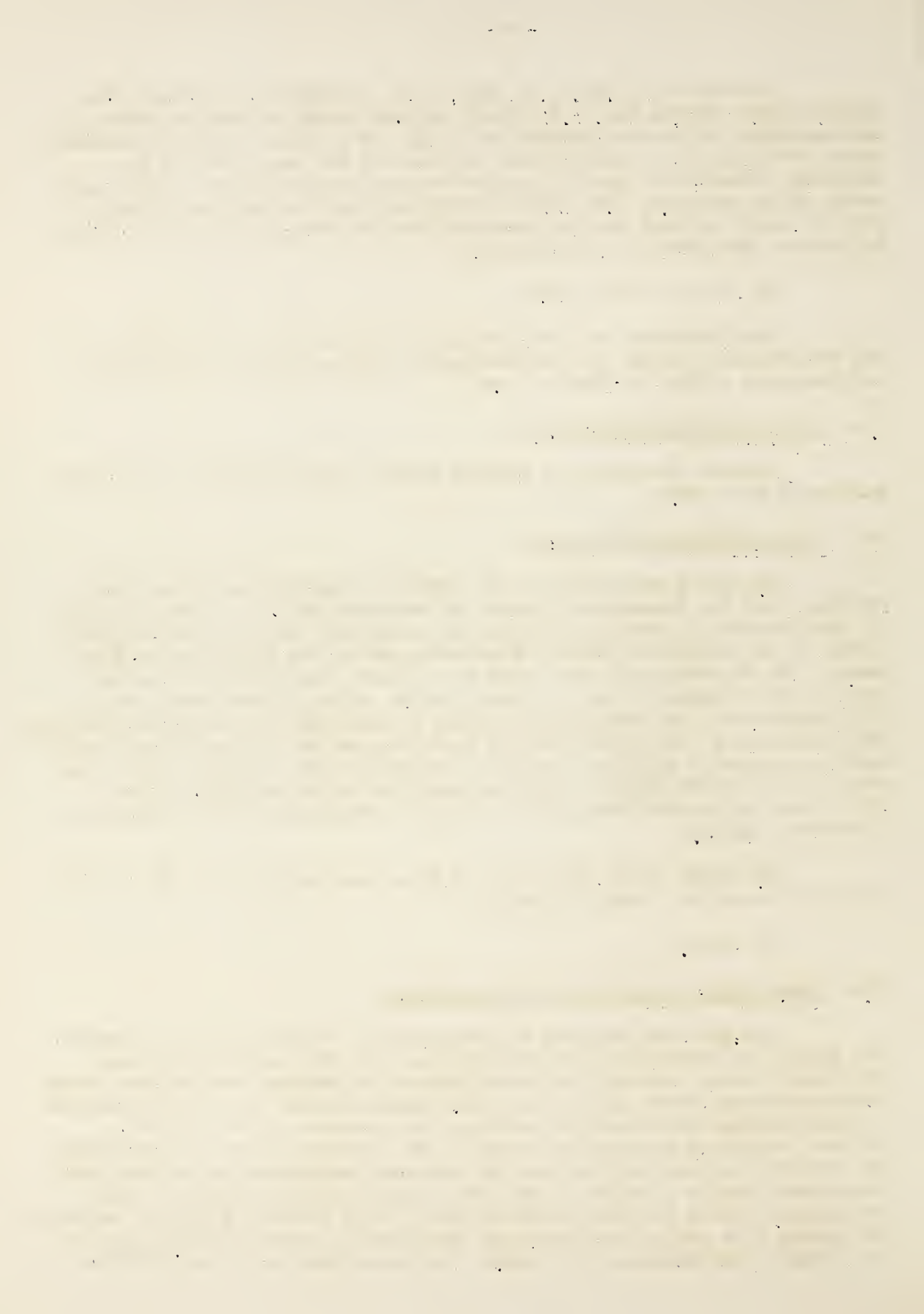
MR. NOLEN reported that the Jefferson Memorial Commission will probably want the Commissions' views and recommendations. At the request of this Commission, studies were made by consultants and their reports submitted to the Jefferson Memorial Commission and to the Commission of Fine Arts. The Chairman felt that there is a general disposition to create a project very monumental and on a large scale, and he is very much afraid that nothing will be accomplished because it will run into considerable money. The Chairman was also of the opinion that the Apex Building might be developed as a memorial building for Thomas Jefferson with a suitable statue or memorial of limited height on the triangle east of the building. The first floor of the building might be devoted exclusively to the purpose of a Jefferson Museum.

MR. MOORE of the Commission of Fine Arts felt that the Chairman's suggestion would be a happy solution.

No action.

30. Home Owners' Loan Corporation Building:

The Chairman reviewed the Commission's action at the last meeting, and stated the Commission approved the plans for this building with one additional story, provided they would remove the existing and proposed water tower structures above this story. MR. NOLEN reported that at the previous meeting drawings were submitted showing the extension of the building, and the Commission addressed a letter to the Treasury Department expressing the opinion that the building was too high and preferred a continuous penthouse roof line to a height of 122 feet 9 inches with no structure above that level. This building is unfortunately in a 110-foot district, entirely surrounded by a 90-foot district, and is directly in line with the dome of the Capitol from Meridian Hill Park. The Supervising Architect's Office



has agreed to the Commission's recommendations to remove the existing and proposed water tower structures, but it will be necessary to increase the height of the roof 2 feet 9 inches in order to provide space for mechanical equipment and for elevators. The highest part of the masonry coping will not exceed 122 feet 9 inches. The building to the set-back is 110 feet above the grade of the street, and the pent-house structure is set back at an angle of 45 degrees to a height of 125 feet 6 inches to the roof top, making a continuous pent-house roof line with the towers removed.

Discussion by MR. F. A. DELANO, MR. NICHOLS, MR. W. A. DELANO, MR. MOORE of the Commission of Fine Arts, and MR. NOLEN. MR. MOORE expressed his opposition to the large electric display signs on buildings in this vicinity, and stated that the Commissioners were cooperating with them in every way toward their removal.

No action.

31. Plans for Warehouse in Reservation D:

MR. CAMMERER stated that the Commission of Fine Arts did not feel that the type of building proposed was appropriate in connection with the museum buildings in the Mall. The Treasury Department is ready to condemn the property and some decision should be made as to the plans.

MR. MOORE felt that this is an inappropriate building to face the public park.

Discussion by MR. F. A. DELANO, MR. CAMMERER, MR. W. A. DELANO, CAPT. CLARK, MR. NOLEN and MR. MOORE and M. J. CLARKE of the Commission of Fine Arts.

No action.

32. Gas Station Problems:

The Chairman read the memorandum on this subject:

"It is pretty generally recognized that the constant increase in the number of filling stations creates a good deal of a nuisance. Even the people in that line of business admit that it is being terribly overdone and that they are eating each other up. Here in the National Capital, under the present Zoning Act, it appears to be impossible to prevent filling stations from going in any place that is zoned commercial or industrial. Therefore, in giving consideration to the problem, it has seemed to me that two things might properly be done:

(1) Establish a license system under the Commissioners of the District under which filling stations would not be licensed except on a substantial fee and under suitable rules of location, for example, putting more than one filling station at a single street intersection seems rather absurd.





(2) We might properly ask Congress for a law that would class filling stations as public utilities and therefore under the supervision of the Public Utilities Commission.

I would be glad to have this matter considered individually by the members of the Commission and have them prepared to express an opinion at the next meeting.

Frederic M. Delano,  
Chairman.

MR. MOORE stated that they have requested the District Commissioners and the Zoning Commission to cooperate in controlling gasoline stations.

MR. NOLAN, in discussing this matter, stated that there is need for better coordination of the views of the Government agencies. He cited for example the station proposed at North Capitol Street and Massachusetts Avenue, to which the Post Office Department indicated they had no objections, but to which the Commission would object materially from a city planning standpoint. The Post Office Department naturally is not in a position to pass on the question from a city planning standpoint. He suggested as a temporary expedient that the Zoning Advisory Committee be authorized to review all applications for gasoline stations, and make their recommendations to the District Commissioners, the Planning Commission and the Zoning Commission.

MR. MOORE suggested that it might be desirable to have them regulated by the Public Utilities Commission, and discussed the possibility of having legislation introduced to bring this about.

Discussion by MR. F. M. DELANO, MR. CHAMBERLAIN, MR. MOORE, MR. NICHOLS and MR. NOLAN.

MOTION unanimously carried that the Zoning Advisory Committee be requested to review and express their views on the issuance of permits for gasoline stations before the application is approved.

The Chairman requested suggestions from the individual members as to possible ways of handling this matter, and the Secretary was instructed to investigate the method of regulating gasoline stations in New York.

MOTION unanimously carried that the Commission protest the issuance of a permit for a gasoline station opposite the Post Office building at Massachusetts Avenue and North Capitol Street, and that the Executive Officer is authorized to take this matter up with the District Commissioners as well as the Post Office Department.



33. National Gallery of Art:

MR. NOLEN stated that the deed of trust providing the Art Gallery has not been examined so the details of the gift are not known to the staff.

MR. W. F. DELNO stated that MR. BELLON would like to have his representative meet with a joint committee of the Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts to explain the plans for the gallery before any definite action is taken.

MR. MOORE, in discussing a site in the Mall, stated that no architect would want to erect a building opposite the large building on the north of Constitution Avenue between 12th and 14th Streets. He also emphasized the importance of having ample grounds for suitable treatment and expansion of the building. He also stated that the two Commissions will have to keep an open mind for a long time to come in order to develop a proper plan.

Discussion by MR. MOORE, MR. CAMERER and MR. NICHOLS included acquisition of remaining property in the Southwest Triangle area; type of buildings to front on the Mall.

No action.

34. General Accounting Office Building: (See also Par. 17):

The Chairman stated that the Procurement Division has brought in a plan for a building which completely occupies the site in Judiciary Square, to be 11 stories high and have 700,000 square feet of space instead of 500,000 square feet.

MR. MOORE, in discussing a site south of the Mall, stated that the original intention was to have the same type of buildings south of the Mall that are now north of Constitution Avenue.

Discussion by MR. F. F. DELNO, MR. MOORE and MR. NICHOLS included the desirability of creating a more balanced development by expanding southeast of the Mall; and traffic flow to center of city.

No action.

The Commission of Fine Arts withdrew at this point.

